

## Message Text

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70

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-15

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-15 NIC-01 AID-20 PC-04 OMB-01 CU-04

DRC-01 /157 W

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R 041835Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3831

INFO USCINCSO

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 7312

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AR

SUBJECT: PERON SAYS HE DID NOT FIRE PUIGGROS

REF: BA-7208, BA-7284

1. SUMMARY: PERON'S REPORTED DENIAL OF HAVING REQUESTED PUIGGROS' RESIGNATION CONFUSES ISSUE AND OPENS UP POSSIBILITY OF SERIOUS CONFRONTATION BETWEEN LEFTIST STUDENTS AND AUTHORITIES. END SUMMARY.

2. STUDENT REACTION TO PUIGGROS RESIGNATION HAS BEEN MILD UP TO THIS POINT. THERE HAS BEEN NO VIOLENCE AND DESPITE SYMBOLIC OCCUPATIONS (SEE BA-7284), MOST CLASSES ARE BEING HELD. ONE EXCEPTION TO RULE IS RECTOR'S OFFICE, WHERE ACCESS IS BEING DENIED TO PERSONS WHO DO NOT SUPPORT PUIGGROS. THIS BEING DONE MAINLY TO PREVENT BANFI FROM TAKING OVER.

3. IN THE MOST PUZZLING DEVELOPMENT YET, PUIGGROS ANNOUNCED LAST NIGHT THAT HE HAD JUST MET WITH PERON AND THAT LATTER, IN CONFIDENTIAL

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PRESENCE OF EX-VICE PRESIDENT LIMA, HAD TOLD HIM HE HAD NOT

REQUESTED RESIGNATION NOR HAD HE BEEN CONSULTED CONCERNING BANFI'S NOMINATION AS RECTOR. PERON APPARENTLY DID NOT RPT DID NOT, HOWEVER, GO ON TO SUGGEST THAT PUIGGROS SHOULD REMAIN AT UNIVERSITY. HE SIMPLY DENIED HAVING INITIATED CALL FOR HIS RESIGNATION.

COMMENT: DESPITE PERON'S REPORTED DENIAL, THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT BUT THAT HE DID IN FACT ORDER TAIANA TO FIRE PUIGGROS. IT IS ALMOST INCONCEIVABLE THAT TAIANA WOULD HAVE TAKEN THIS STEP WITHOUT FIRST CLEARING WITH PERON, EXPECIALLY AS HE STATED PUBLICLY THAT HE WAS ACTING ON PERON'S ORDERS. ONE PERONIST CONTACT TOLD EMBOFF SEVERAL DAYS AGO THAT TAIANA WAS PROBABLY ON HIS WAY OUT AS EDUCATION MINISTER (THOUGH HE STILL HAD PERON'S CONFIDENCE AND MIGHT BE GIVEN ANOTHER JOB). WITH TAIANA THUS IN EXPENDABLE POSITION, IT WOULD BE UNDERSTANDABLE FOR PERON TO HAVE USED THIS OPPORTUNITY TO GET RID OF PUIGGROS AND AT THE SAME TIME LET TAIANA TAKE ALL THE HEAT. HOWEVER, THE INITIAL MILD REACTION ON THE PART OF THE STUDENTS AND PRO-PUIGGROS PROFESSORS WAS BELIEVED TO BE LARGELY A RESULT OF THE BELIEF ON THEIR PART THAT PUIGGROS' RESIGNATION HAD BEEN DIRECTLY REQUESTED BY PERON. THEY MIGHT BE WILLING TO TAKE ON EDUCATION MINISTER TAIANA OR EVEN PRESIDENT LASTIRI BUT THEY WOULD HESITATE AT A DIRECT CLASH WITH PERON. PERON'S DENIAL THAT HE INITIATED ORDER THUS REMOVES A MAJOR INHIBITION AND OPENS UP THE POSSIBILITY OF SERIOUS CONFRONTATIONS WHICH WOULD SEEM TO BE THE LAST THING PERON WOULD WANT. A MASS MEETING AT UNIVERSITY HAS NOW BEEN SCHEDULED FOR TONIGHT TO SHOW SUPPORT FOR PUIGGROS. PERON'S INTENTIONS HERE ARE SIMPLY TOO BYZENTINE TO FOLLOW WITH SIMPLE LOGIC. HIS PENCHANT FOR TAKING TWO STEPS FORWARD AND ONE BACK IS WELL KNOWN. HOWEVER, IN THIS CASE HIS ONE STEP BACK MAY BRING ABOUT A WORSE SITUATION THAN IF HE HAD TAKEN NO STEPS AT ALL.

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